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List of issues and questions in relation to the eighth periodic report of Bangladesh

Addendum

Replies of Bangladesh*

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Introduction

1. Bangladesh is committed in ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women. Since the independence of the country in 1971, the Government of Bangladesh has been relentlessly working for the empowerment of women and addressing gender inequality. Policies and institutional measures were initiated under the leadership of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Progressive actions and initiatives gradually shifted to ensure equity based approach considering women as pivotal agent of economic development and social transformation. Bangladesh ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and signed the Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations post-2015 development agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals, and working in fulfilling the commitments under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

2. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees women equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and public life [Article 28-2] and prohibits discrimination and inequality on the basis of sex. Article 28(1) ensures non-discrimination against any citizen on grounds only of sex and that the State can make special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens [Article 28-4]. The Constitution provides for upholding of a democratic process, a society free from exploitation, securing rule of law, fundamental human rights, equality and justice for all. Article 27 provides "all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to get equal protection of law". Thus the principles of equality and non-discrimination, the fundamental premise of the Convention had been well reflected in the Constitution of Bangladesh since 1972.

3. Bangladesh has committed to the global community to follow the Sustainable Development Goals, the 17-point development agenda that include higher growth, poverty reduction and gender equality. The country strives to attain the targets of development under the Sustainable Development Goal framework, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and promote gender equality. The Convention on the Rights of Child, the Human Rights Convention and International Labour Organization conventions also provide basis for women's empowerment and upholding their rights in all spheres of life.

4. Bangladesh has undertaken multi-pronged approach for the advancement of women and upholding their rights, which have resulted in improved human development and gender equality indicators. The country already stands out well on gender equality among comparable per capita income countries. Having eliminated the gender disparity in primary and secondary education, Bangladesh made solid progress in reducing the large gap between male and female students at the tertiary level. A pluralistic health system with many stakeholders, women-focused, equity-oriented and targeted programmes, has shown positive trends for women's health. Bangladesh has also advanced well in providing the regulatory framework for protection of women's rights and privileges. The most important step has been adaption of the National Women Development Policy (NWDP) in 2011 and several supportive laws, which are discussed in the following sections.

5. The Government is also aware of its unfinished agenda. Some of the important areas like women's low labour force participation, existence of violence against

women, wage discrimination against women, inadequate presence of women in decision making positions need special attention. The progressive legal provisions protecting rights of women need enforcement. The Government takes the challenge of implementation of the Convention and enforcement of other gender related laws to protect women's rights and eliminate all discriminations.

6. The Government's Vision 2021 guides the development agenda and covers two medium-term (five-year) development plans, The Sixth Five Year Plan (6FYP-2011-16) and the 7th Five Year Plan (7FYP-2016-2020). It sketched a development scenario with higher standard of living, better education, better social justice, more equitable socioeconomic environment, upholding of women's rights and better protection from climate change and natural disasters. The 6FYP implemented actions towards this and the country achieved success in the gender equality indicators. The 7FYP has identified strategies and action areas accordingly.

General

7. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), assigned by the Statistical Act of 2013 as the lead agency for generating official statistics collects and collates statistics for all national censuses and other surveys. Some other agencies also collect and compile statistics in specific areas in collaboration with BBS. Bangladesh collects and compiles the minimum set of gender indicators as agreed at the Statistical Commission in 2013. Out of the agreed fifty two indicators, Bangladesh is collecting and compiling data for 47 indicators through different censuses and surveys. Current important surveys include Population Census, Household Income and Expenditure Survey, Labour Force Survey, Price and Wage Rate Survey, Sample Vital Registration Survey, Health and Demographic Survey, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, and Literacy Assessment Survey. BBS also conducts a number of sample surveys either as its regular activity or on an ad-hoc basis and has planned to improve the frequency of collecting important data.

8. BBS published a compendium of gender related statistics in 2009 compiling statistics from different surveys and censuses. Another compendium compiling the relevant available statistics on the minimum agreed indicators has been compiled as Gender Statistics of Bangladesh 2012. BBS collected and compiled data on the nine indicators on violence against women, as agreed at the Statistical Commission and published a report on Survey on Prevalence of Violence against Women, in 2013.

9. BBS has already prepared a plan to address data gap considering the targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals. The data gaps will be addressed through 44 different survey and studies. Some of the important ones are Time Use Survey, Survey of Decent work Indicator, Informal Sectors Statistics, Survey on Violence against Women of Bangladesh, Compilation of Gender Statistics in Bangladesh, Child and Mother Nutrition Survey, Welfare Monitoring Survey, Census on Professionals and special community, etc. Efforts will continue to ensure collection of sex disaggregated data in all studies to minimize the data gap.

Constitutional and legislative framework

10. Bangladesh has enacted several laws and policies promoting women's rights, such as Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act, Acid Control Act,

Dowry Prohibition Act, Citizenship Act, Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act. The Government formulated the National Women Development Policy 2011 in light of Constitution, the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action in consultation with the stakeholders including human rights organizations, women's rights activists, and the civil society. Most of the civil laws, therefore uphold equal rights for women and men. Women have the right to participate in political process, own property, elect or be elected and take employment. The Government ensures following of one's religious faith and provisions in personal life.

Reservations

11. As indicated in the main report the Government is considering the merit of withdrawal of the reservation on article 16.1 (c) of the Convention following examples from other Muslim majority countries. The Government is collecting information about countries with Muslim majority, which have withdrawn or not put reservation on the clauses for further analysis. The grounds and conditions of withdrawal or not having reservation in Muslim majority countries need careful examination. Since the agenda is a very large one touching all citizens, a buy in from the majority is essential based on appropriate interpretation of religious provisions. The Government will also study the experience and practices of other countries with similar sociocultural, religious and legal systems and find out the context in which they have succeeded in withdrawing and/or considerably narrowing their reservations to the Convention. The implication of the withdrawal on the existing laws also has to be examined.

National machinery for the advancement of women

12. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has the responsibility of overseeing the affairs related to women and children who together constitute almost 70 per cent of the population. The Government with its limited resources has established mechanisms like National Council for Women and Child Development (NCWCD) headed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister with representation of civil society, the WID Focal Point Implementation and Evaluation Committee headed by the Minister of MoWCA and the WID Focal Point Coordination Committee headed by the Secretary. The Government values the partnership and cooperation with Civil Society Organizations and private sector and their important role in women's development. The partnership and cooperation with development and advocacy groups and private sector and development partners have been strengthened as critical resources for playing the role assigned to MoWCA.

13. MoWCA has established a general practice of inviting civil society organizations to pursue issues of national importance jointly and consult while formulating reports, policies and laws. Similar practice is also followed by other Ministries. During formulation of the domestic violence legislation, there were regular interactions and dialogues between the Law Commission, MoWCA, members of Parliament and various human rights and women's rights organizations through CIDV (Citizens' Initiatives for Domestic Violence) a coalition of civil society organizations. Such consultations have been a regular practice of the Government while formulating laws, rules, policies as well as while preparing national plans, programmes and reports. The report on the Convention

implementation and Beijing Platform for Action was shared with civil society organizations and women groups extensively and their feedback was incorporated. Civil society organizations were active partners while developing the National Action Plan for Women Development. The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012 and the Rules for the implementation of this Act were results of civil society organizations active contribution. MoWCA coordinated with the United Nations and CBOS revising the Child Marriage Restraint Act and in preparing the National Plan of Action for Prevention of Child Marriage. MoWCA has more than 16,000 community based organizations registered under the Department of Women Affairs, whose representatives are consulted from time to time. The Government collaborated with civil society organizations to incorporate issues of strategic relevance for women and children when the 7FYP and the National Social Security Strategy were developed.

14. To develop capacity of MoWCA and its agencies, the Government has increased budget allocation and human resources as follows.

Table 1
Budget Allocation of the MoWCA from 2011-12 to 2016-2017

Financial year	*Non-development budget*	*Development budget*	*Total allocation*
2011-2012	105 641.10	18 135.26	123 776.36
2012-2013	113 370.06	20 006.28	133 376.34
2013-2014	117 490.71	25 065.00	142 555.00
2014-2015	140 639.98	12 650.00	153 289.98
2015-2016	161 418.36	15 018.00	176 436.36
2016-2017	198 200.00	16 800.00	215 000.00

Source: MoWCA.

15. To address the need of children effectively, the process of establishing a Department of Children Affairs with required financial and human resources is underway. Given the multi-dimensional development needs of women, the Government is doing its best, however the total resource envelope is not sufficient to meet all the requirements of the large population.

Temporary special measures

16. Many special measures are in place including those on women's reserved seats in the Parliament as per the Constitution, reserved seats in local government including Union Council, City Municipality Corporation, and Upazila Parishad. The number of reserved seat in Parliament was increased in 2012. Also quota provisions for women in public sector jobs, civil service and law enforcing agencies as well quota for secondary and primary school teachers have been introduced at different points of time and continued. Stipend for children at primary education introduced in 2001 has been expanded to bring the female students under the compulsory primary education for all. About 50.4 per cent of total students of primary level are girls. Stipend for girls at college level was introduced in 2002-2003. Women's membership in school management committee has been reaffirmed.

17. The Labour Rules, 2015 provides for one third representation of women in labour representation committees of enterprises where at least one third labourers are women. To attract women in non-traditional skills, Skills for Employment Investment Programme under Finance Division has targeted at least 30 per cent female of 260,0000 trainees to be trained on market responsive skills by the end of December 2017. SEIP provides stipend to all women trainees. Skills and Employment Programme, Bangladesh under Ministry of Education focuses on building the skills of workers in potential growth sectors. Out of 65,000 trainees of SEP-B, 60 per cent will be women. Supporting the disadvantaged group is a major task of Skills and Training Enhancement Project. As many as 523,000 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students, which include all female students, will receive stipends.

Stereotype and harmful practices

18. Despite all the progress in education, income, employment diversity, some prevailing conservatism and social norms at times affect enforcement of laws and policies. The effects of campaigns by government institutions and civil society organizations on the importance of marriage after attaining adulthood, registration of marriages, measures like education stipend are visible in the changed role of women in the society and gradual increase in mean age at marriage. Social norms related to girl's education, health and economic participation is gradually changing positively. Improvement in education, health and employment related attainments are evident. Still some families especially poor ones prefer sons and do not recognize the need of developing women as economic, social or political agents. Their daughters are deprived of higher education and employment and fall victim of early marriage. Despite efforts and legislation to prevent child marriage, due to lack of legal and health awareness, tradition, ignorance, and poverty, many families arrange for early marriage of their daughters.

19. The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2016 replacing the earlier one of 1929 is waiting for approval of the Parliament to curb child marriage. A National Plan of Action (NPA) on Ending Child Marriage 2016 has been drafted. The goal of the NPA is "Ending All Child marriage in Bangladesh by 2041, with eradication of all marriages under 15 by 2021 and reduction of child marriage by one third in the 15-18 age groups" as per the commitments of the Hon'ble Prime Minister at the Girl's Summit in London in 2014. The NPA is being widely consulted, which will be approved upon enactment of the new Child Marriage Restraint Act by the Parliament. The actions related to prevention of child marriage include mobilizing families and communities, economic security, attractive educational institutions, Child Sensitive Budgeting, observation of Child Marriage Prevention Day, organizing Youth for Change, running National Helpline Centre and Adolescent Clubs and registering births and marriage. Already 75 million births of all ages have been registered digitally. Governance Innovation Unit (GIU) of Prime Minister's Office has taken steps to prevent child marriage through developing a database of persons who solemnize the marriages, reviewing the Child Marriage Prevention Measures and promoting District and Upazila Administration to Prevent Children Marriage. MoWCA has also initiated the amendment of Dowry Prohibition Act 1980.

20. The interventions on child marriage eradication include awareness raising and both financial and non-financial incentives at varying levels. Besides the Female Secondary School Stipend Programme, employment linkages and skills development have been implemented by the Government and NGOs. Community awareness programmes and actions involving civil society, men and youth against the existing harmful practices, such as dowry, VAW, child marriage, illegal Fatwa, sexual harassment, etc. The local government institutions, NGOs and electronic and print media are active in advocating for equal rights of girls and boys in education, health and in all spheres of life. As part of the mobilization and awareness raising programmes on gender equality, the issues of Girl child is taken as an important agenda. Initiatives on girls' education; recognizing the social worth of girl child; prevention of child marriage, violence, and dowry; promotion of technical education among girls and reproductive health are issues of advocacy.

21. Ministry of Information encourages media in producing articles on women's contribution to the family and national economy and on the need of women's development. Organizing International Women's Day; May Day, Girl Child Day, Begum Rokeya Day (Day for commemorating the birth of Begum Rokeya) a woman who pioneered for women's emancipation a hundred year ago and awarding of Rokeya Padak (Award) are measures for raising awareness on value of girls and women. National television and radio broadcast awareness raising programmes every day. The State-owned Bangladesh Television and 23 private Television channels are now working. 32 Community Radio stations have been approved to cover local issues of which 15 in operation. Twenty-eight new private FM radio channels have been approved (12 are working) to build awareness among citizen. National Broadcasting Policy has been prepared with the objectives of strengthening broadcasting for development and portrayal of women's productive roles.

22. To portray the value of women, primary stipend money is sent through mother's bank account. The Department of Women Affairs (DWA) and others are implementing several projects for enhancing girls' participation in community activities. A National Children's Taskforce was formed in collaboration with NGO partners at the district and national level as a mechanism for eliciting children's views and promoting their roles as stakeholders.

Violence against women

23. Various supports and services under the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women (MSPVAW) of the MoWCA are being implemented jointly by the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of Denmark in collaboration of 10 ministries. Eight One-Stop Crisis Centres located at the public medical college hospitals provides health care, police assistance, DNA test, social services, legal assistance, psychosocial counselling and shelter services. Besides, a total of 60 One-Stop Crisis Cells were established in districts and upazila hospitals for mobilizing the various services within and outside the hospitals for women and children victims of violence. For streagthening psychosocial counselling for the women and children victims of violence, the National Trauma Counselling Centre was established under this programme. National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory ensuring speedy and fair trial for the incidences of violence against women and children. National Helpline Centre for Women and Children established under the MSPVAW remains open for 24 hours. Women and children victims of violence and other stakeholders

can get necessary information, suggestions about available services from this toll free helpline (10921). This number is accessed both from mobile and other phones. The information about the help line is being disseminated through media, posters and discussion. Plan is underway to display the helpline numbers in text books cover page for wider dissemination. To improve the access to justice, Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act, 2014 was enacted.

24. Seven Women Support Centres (WSC) under DWA in six Divisions and one district town provides support to the victims of violence. Besides there are eight victim support centres run by Ministry of Home Affairs and some shelter homes are run by NGOs. Another helpline number (1098) has been allocated for addressing the issues relating to children. The families and others can get necessary information and advices including existing services available for women and children victims.

25. WSC of DWA receives complaints of the victims, mediates conflict through counselling, settlement of den mohor (dower), maintenance of wife and children, etc. Here women can stay for a maximum period of six months with two children of aged not exceeding 12 years. During their stay in the centre, medicine, food and other essentials are supplied free of cost.

26. MoWCA has a central VAW prevention cell, DWA also has VAW prevention cells in its head office and DWA has district level offices from where 2500 women have received legal support including collection of dower and maintenance. A legal Cell at the central office of Jastiya Mohila Shangstha received 286 complaints in the last three years and 238 cases were resolved. A safe home has been established near Dhaka to prevent women, children and adolescent from staying with prisoners in jail during the period of litigation until judgment.

27. Suppression of violence against women and children act 2000, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, the Dowry Prohibition Act 1985 are in force. Section 509 of the Penal Code 1872 was included in the Mobile Court Schedule that empowers executive magistrates to try a person summarily for eve-teasing and sexual harassment. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court provided guidelines to employers and educational institutions to formulate policies to address sexual harassment in work places, educational institutions and other public places.

28. The National Legal Aid Committee of the Law and Justice Division provides free legal aid to the poor and vulnerable women litigants across the country. The Individual District Legal Aid Committees headed by the District Judge in the districts convene monthly meetings to select poor women litigants to provide such aid. Thus access to justice has increased which also ensured the prevention of violence against women. As many as 40,400 women received free legal aid services until 2015. Another 1,842 women received legal aid through hotline from this committee. Upazila and Union Legal Aid committees formed under supervision of District Committee and poor women litigants are getting legal support for preventing child marriage and dowry. Besides, through the labour legal aid cell, women workers of garments and other sectors where women are giving physical labour, receive legal aid services.

29. There are 54 Women and Child Repression Prevention Tribunals in 46 districts, of which five tribunals are in Dhaka. The number of total pending cases in all the 54 tribunals until December, 2015 was 1,89,991 out of which 45,200 cases were filed

in the year 2015. The figures show community awareness to bring the cases to the judiciary for justice. In 2015 the number of total disposed of cases was 40,120. The rate of disposal was about 89.20 per cent. Extrajudicial Punishment in the name of Fatwa (Religious verdict) has been declared as illegal by the Appellate Division.

30. NGOs and Women Groups provide legal aid and hotline services. They include Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, Ain-O-Shalish Kendra, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, Naripokkho, Madaripur Legal Aid, Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust. BMP runs a shelter home for women victims of violence.

31. During last four years 3,694 women have received services from eight victims Support Centres (VSC) under Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) in various districts. "Help Desk" have been established in four districts and at 10 upazilas under MoHA to ensure security measures and quality service at the thana level. A Gender Management Information System has been created where information regarding cases of violence against women are recorded for ensuring fair trial.

32. The "Involvement of Religious Leaders in preventing Violence against Women Programme" provided training to 2,250 religious leaders and 2,220 women on matters such as gender consciousness, family planning, and awareness about AIDS, protest terrorism, and resistance against dowry. MSPVAW of MoWCA has been providing training for Immas, Judges, Districts Police and Teachers.

33. Bangladesh Police Academy organizes a two weeks Course of Reproductive Health and Gender Issue that address violence against women issues for police personnel. Also development partners supported projects arrange training for Law enforcement personnel on how to address VAW.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

34. To combat and prevent human trafficking, MoHA is implementing an "Anti-trafficking Mechanism and Monitoring" project for rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked victims, women and children. A task force on Rescue Repatriation, Rehabilitation and Integration (RRRI) was established. In 2015, 2,464 cases of repatriation were sent from different sources and 780 women and children were repatriated. Protection and rehabilitation of the trafficking victims has been taken as an important agenda and implemented in collaboration with NGOs. Bangladesh National Women lawyers Association runs a shelter home for victims of trafficking. Bangladesh is now in tier 2 according to the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report (Year) of the US State Department.

35. In Bangladesh prostitution is not a legitimate profession and is generally discouraged. The Ministry of Social Welfare runs a project for rehabilitation of young sex workers. Training and Rehabilitation Centres for the Socially Disadvantaged Girls has been established to house sex workers who want to be rehabilitated.

36. In 2015 a total of 342 persons including 125 Border Guard Bangladesh, 25 Criminal Investigation Department and 25 Special Branch members and 167 police received training on child friendly interview skills. 42 police, BGB and Coast Guard received training of trainers. In 2013, 40 judges (six women) were oriented on the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012 and the drafi Rules. A training manual for police personnel was developed and 82 police officials were

trained at the Forensic Training Institute, Criminal Investigation Department and the Special Branch Training School. The salient features of the PSHT Act 2012, investigation of human trafficking as an organized crime including coverage of ex-country investigation were included in the training. Also 61 lawyers, public prosecutors and civil society organization staff were oriented on the PSHT Act. An Integrated Crime Data Management System has been established at the Police Headquarters where all information of trafficking victims/survivors are preserved.

Participation in political and public life

37. Bangladesh has reserved seats in the Parliament and local government institutions (LGI) for women and women can also contest in general seats in all elections. Total numbers of women voters were 45.84 million. The number of reserved seats was raised to 50 in 2012 from 45. The Representation of People's Ordinance (RPO) 2013 emphasized Political parties must reserve at least 33 per cent positions of all committee's positions for women as per law. The current picture of women in local government is given below.

Table 2
Women in Parliament and local government

A. National Parliament election

Name of the Election	*No. of nominated women candidates*	*No. of directly elected women members*	*No. of reserved women members*
10th National parliament Election, 2014	29 nominated (30 seats)	18 elected (19 seats). After bye election at present elected women members are 21.	50

B. Local government election

1. City corporation election

Name of the City Corporation	*Mayor*		*Councillor in General Seats*			*Women councillor in reserved seats*
	No. of women candidates	*No. of elected women Mayor*	*No. of seats*	*No. of women candidates*	*No. of elected women councillor*	
Dhaka North	Nil	Nil	36	10	Nil	
Dhaka South	Nil	Nil	57	8	Nil	
Chittagoan	Nil	Nil	41	3	Nil	

2. Municipality election 2015

Name of Municipality	*Mayor*		*Councillor in General Seats*		*Women councillor in reserved seats*
	No. of women candidates	*No. of elected women mayor*	*No. of women candidates*	*No. of elected women councillor*	
257	17	4	48	6	804

3. 4th Upazila Parishad election

No. of Upazila	*Chairman*		*Vice-Chairman in general seats*		*No. of Women members in reserved seats*
	No. of women candidates	*No. of elected women candidates*	*No. of women candidates*	*No. of elected women councillor*	
483	29	3	3	1	1 560

4. Upazila Parishad election 2016

No. of union	*Chairman*		*No. of Women members in reserved seats*
	No. of women candidates	*No. of elected women candidates*	
4 104	231	27	12 312

Source: Election Commission.

38. The local government acts allocate reserved seats for women equivalent to one third of general seats in all local government institutions (LGIs). For the first time, a woman was elected as Mayor of a City Corporation in 2011.

39. In 64 District councils, five posts of District Council Administrators are occupied by women. Women of LGIs are in all 14 Standing Committees of the Union Parishad and 17 Upazila Parishad Committees. Elected women representative of the LGIs are trained through National Institute of Local Government and Local Government Engineering Department. The Local Government Division has issued guidelines to involve women LGI members in one fourth of all committees as chair.

40. Women are to constitute 30 per cent of the members in Water Management Cooperative Associations, Water and Sanitation Committees and 40 per cent of the Co-management Committees of forests, 30 per cent of the Labour Representation Committees of factories where more than 30 per cent labourers are women. Similar provisions have been made in other sectors also. Women's representation in School Management Committees has increased over time because of regulatory decisions of the Government.

41. Appointment to civil service is on the basis of both merit and quota. 10 per cent of officer and 15 per cent of staff posts are reserved for women. There is steady progress in the numbers of women in service at mid and senior levels from 8.5 per cent in 1999 to 15 per cent in 2006 and 21 per cent in 2011. As per government initiatives women participation in policy levels is increasing. At present six secretaries, 59 additional secretaries, 103 joint secretaries, 190 deputy secretaries, 348 Senior Assistant Secretaries and 382 Assistant Secretaries are women. More than the official rate of 10 per cent as reserved by the Government. Presently, 1,087 or 20.04 per cent female officials out of a total of 5,423 are working in the Administrative Cadre. Currently eight women in the Foreign Service are heading missions and five of them are Ambassadors.

42. For diversifying employment options in non-traditional areas, the Government has recruited women in armed forces and law enforcing agencies. Women have been successful as paratroopers and most recently women joined Bangladesh Navy and the shipping services. Bangladeshi women police contingent working in United Nations peacekeeping missions have been highly appreciated. Currently an Additional IG, two

DIGs, two additional DIGs, twelve AIGs, one Superintendent of Police in one district, 57 additional SP, 21 Sr. ASP and 134 ASP are women among BCS police officers. Among 1,45,991 members of Bangladesh Police, 7,554 or 5.17 per cent are women. Six women Jail Superintendent and 12 women Deputy Jailors have been posted for the first time. As a result, in overall management and decision making process of the police force women officers and employees are playing vital role.

43. Several women are performing as Directors of Boards of Banks. Women also are members and presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and Industries. The Draft Industrial Policy 2015 provides for representation of the President of Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chairperson of Women Entrepreneurs' Association in the National Council for Industrial Development, which is chaired by the Prime Minister. Membership of the President of BWCCI at the Executive Committee of the NCID is also incorporated to review the implementation of the Policy.

44. The Bangladesh Handicraft Policy 2015 provides for developing women's capacity to manage handicraft enterprises. The Agriculture Policy 2013 provides for women's involvement in decision making in agricultural management and in agriculture marketing. The Labour Act also provides that where a trade union is formed in an establishment where 20 per cent of the total working force or members are women, the union executive committee should have at least 10 per cent women members. As per the Microcredit Regulatory Authority Rules, 2010, every microcredit organization has to have at least two women members in the general body and at least two women members in its Council of Directors for its management for tenure of three years. The Skills Development Policy 2011 recognized the over representation of males in the sector and proposed to develop an affirmative action strategy to ensure that at least 30 per cent of managerial and senior faculty positions are held by women. The Water Act 2013 called for institutional changes in enhancing the role of women in water management.

Nationality

45. The Government has further examined the issue of passing nationality from a woman to her husband of foreign nationality. A draft has been prepared to revise the Citizenship Act for passing citizenship to the spouse of foreign nationality by a Bangladeshi citizen. It includes the conditions and time of stay in Bangladesh to acquire citizenship as spouse. The draft is under review by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Education

46. The High Court provided an eight point directives to combat sexual harassment in educational institutions. The Ministry of Education has issued circular to all educational institutions to establish a complaint and redress mechanism as per Court directives. Education institutions have already established the complaint and redress mechanism.

47. Emphasising on girls' education, several measures are under way to increase their participation in education including free education for girls up to twelve grade in government institutions, secondary stipend programmes for girls, Food for

Education Programme, free distribution of text books up to class ten, toilet facilities in educational institutions, recruitment of women teachers. Steps have been undertaken for extensive use of computer in classrooms and an e-platform for teachers has been established. About 7.87 million poor students get stipend at primary level across the country. Stipend to 3.09 million girl students at higher secondary level has reduced dropout rate. Every day 2 million students are getting 75 gm biscuits and free education materials distributed in 61 sub-districts. Admission rate (99.64 per cent) at primary level increased. Women's representation in Primary School Management Committees reached 41.3 per cent in 2014 and in rural schools the rate was 41.8 per cent. Share of women in School Management Committees (SMCs) and proportion of SMCs with more female than men reached to 28.7 per cent in 2014. The Education Watch 2015 reported that proportion of primary schools with more women teachers, heads of institutions and SMC members showed upward trend. A new Education Act is being formulated which will address some of the issues identified here.

48. A total of 35 public universities of which 17 are technical universities (six established since 2010, four of them are technical universities) and 80 private universities are operational in the country. Twelve more private universities have been approved. One public university and two private universities are exclusively for girls. All others also enrol girls and higher education among girls is gradually increasing. Currently there are 25.47 per cent women as university teachers and 32.85 per cent of students are girls. The total enrolment in Teacher Education is recorded at 2,669 of which 559 (20.94 per cent) are women.

Table 3
Statistics of students in tertiary level technical education

Courses	*Male student*	*Female student*	*Percentage of female*	*Total*
B.Sc Engineering	978	186	15.97	1 164
B.Sc in Technical Education	36	11	23.40	47
Diploma in Technical Education	80	21	20.79	101

Source: Directorate of Technical Education.

49. A total of 30 public medical colleges (13 established after 2010) and 57 private medical colleges (17 established since 2010) are operating. In addition, six medical colleges are run by armed forces. Girls enrolment in medical college reached to 60 per cent. Six private medical collages are only for girls.

50. Girls' enrolment in other technical areas is encouraged. The number of students enrolling in Professional Education is recorded at 1,22,165 of which 47,685 (39.03 per cent) are women; table 3 provides information on boys' and girls' participation in technical education.

Table 4
Statistics of TVET Students for 2015-2016

Courses	*Male student*	*Female student*	*Percentage of female*	*Total student*
SSC Vocational	200 576	92 198	31.49	292 774
Dakhil Vocational	4 805	2 327	32.62	7 132
HSC Business Management	174 463	79 549	31.31	254 012
HSC Vocational	19 729	3 331	14.44	23 060
Diploma in Engineering	250 357	24 523	8.92	274 880
Basic Trade (360 hr)	114 165	51 997	31.29	166 162
Total Students	764 095	253 925	24.94	1 018 020

Source: Directorate of Technical Education.

51. National Science and Technology (NST) fellowship was introduced to attract students and Researchers for study and research in science and technology. They received 1,001 grants during FY 2013-2014, 1343 in FY 2014-2015 and 1,438 during 2015-2016. In those years, respectively 529,669 and 732 women received fellowship. Under Bangabandhu Fellowship on science and information and communications technology, 225 scholars received fellowship to pursue higher studies, of them 72 are women. To popularize science studies, mobile science exhibition and school competition are arranged.

Employment

52. Women's participation in the labour market shows changes in the positive direction. Women's participation in the agriculture has increased mainly because of women's low skills, proximity and migration of male member to urban areas or abroad. Women's participation in industry and service also improved. Since 1991 to 2016 a total of 516,021 women are working abroad (18 countries) of which 60,034 women are working presently abroad.

53. Minimum wage has been declared for 38 sectors since 2009. Over time wage difference declined and in the urban area it is about 92 per cent but the gap in rural areas is higher. The Government has initiated monitoring of wages, particularly in public sector construction work.

54. To meet the skills gap for employment, 23 Ministries provide different levels of skills training to different groups. Besides offering skills for income generation, Initiatives emphasizing employment has been prioritized. Initiatives like SEIP, STEP, Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity and B-SEP are among them. They have intervened in the areas of capacity building of training providers, training of trainers and managers, standard development and accreditation, curriculum development, monitoring mechanisms for quality assurance, support reforms in skills development and enable public training institutions to make skills responsive to emerging labour market needs, etc. The programmes also supports for establishment of Centre of Excellence and development of the labour market information system and to scale up skilling of new entrants and up-skilling of existing workers to increase productivity of the labour force. Of the 260,000

trainees under SEIP about 70 per cent or 182,000 will be provided with gainful jobs with 30 per cent women. Stipend 40,000 trainees from socially disadvantaged, physically challenged and ethnic minority groups will also include women for job placement support services. The project ensures 25 per cent women participation in the pool of trainers. Out of 65,000 trainees under SEP-B, 60 per cent trainees will be women, who will also be and placed in jobs in industry.

55. The National Skill Development Training Centre under MoWCA for women is offering Rural Women Skills Development Training Programme at upazila level. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has also taken a project to implement Skill Training and Employment Promotion for Women through strengthening Teachers Training College.

56. The Labour Policy 2013 states that women's participation in the labour market and minimum wage standard will be ensured and gender based wage differentials will be reduced. The Policy commits for reducing all discrimination against women in the work place, ensuring safe, healthy and women friendly work environment, and provision of occupational health and safety and maternal safety measures. It provides for formulation of laws to protect informal workers and to ensure compliance of corporate social responsibility. Maternity leave has been increased to six months for working mothers in the public sector. Bangladesh Labour Act (amendment) 2013, covered maternity leave of 16 weeks (eight weeks before and eight weeks after childbirth), maternity benefits, non-discriminatory wage structure, prohibition of any form of discrimination against women workers and prohibition of women working between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. without consent. The Labour Rules 2015 elaborates the provisions and provides for the provision of health care, child care, breast feeding, and separate bath facilities, labour/emergency room in large enterprises the premise. Employers can join efforts together with other employers. Provisions are there for at least one third women in trade bodies where more than one third workers are women. The rules elaborate many other positive provisions which identify women as stakeholders and include workplace safety and congenial work environment for women.

57. Considering the need of child care support for working women, MoWCA established 74 day-care centres in all over the country for children of low income working women. Government organizations like BBS and Local Government Engineering Department run day-care centres for their employees. NGOs run day-care centres mainly for low income communities. Several garment factories have established child care centres for their employees. NGOs like BRAC, Fulki and others also provide day-care services for the poor working mothers.

58. The Government has issued directives for all factories having more than 50 women workers to set up day-care services. Until 2016, total 3,878 day-care centres established in factories of which maximum numbers in garments sector. There are 930 day-care centres are under Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association and 122 day-care centres in the factories of Bangladesh Knit Manufacturers and Exporters Association. Bangladesh Textile Manufacturers Association established nine day-care centres and four maternity clinics.

Health

59. Comprehensive initiatives have been taken to extend health-care facilities for women and children. More than 13,000 Community Clinics are working at the grass-roots level for health education, health promotion and treatment of minor ailments, first aid, and identification of emergency and complicated cases for effective referral linkage with the higher facilities. Above 73 per cent of the clients of the clinics are women of whom 90 per cent are poor and more than 46 per cent are of reproductive age. To fill gaps in maternal and neonatal health provision, the Government undertook midwifery training programme and trained 3,000 midwives by 2015. Due to the availability of improved health services safe deliveries are taking place and nutritional status of pregnant women are improving. Population control and reproductive health service has substantially improved because of door-to-door visit of the health workers, supply of necessary medicines, expansion of women, adolescent and children health-care centres, greater availability of reproductive health service as per the demands from women and adolescents girls, and family planning services. The reproductive health related publicity is ongoing to lower the risks of early pregnancy. A website www.adolescent-mchdgfpbd.org has been opened by Directorate of Family Planning to raise public awareness and knowledge about adolescents and reproductive health. The women, from the poorer strata have become more conscious about the time of conceiving and of safe motherhood. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) introduced a Toll-Free Telephone number (1800-180-1104) where from interested people can obtain advice on primary health care.

60. Primary health services, nutrition care, and the programmes of population control have expanded. Specialized health service has allowed women to benefit from these services. With the expansion of nutrition services, women's health has substantially improved. The maternal mortality rate has been decreasing gradually due to women-centric health-care services. Under Five Child Mortality Rate has come down to 41 per one thousand live birth. Bangladesh's success in the reduction of child mortality has earned Bangladesh award from the United Nations. Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has received this award in September 2010.

61. MoHFW developed a Gender Equity Strategy in 2014, which aims at building gender sensitive mechanisms; support policy and programmes to strengthen HIV prevention and promote Sexual and Reproductive Health among most at risk populations, particularly female sex workers. It considers the norms related to early marriage and femininity preventing women and girls from having control over their own bodies and having a say in sexual and reproductive decisions. It aims at women and girls' access to HIV information and services and negotiating safer sex with their partners.

62. The Gender Strategy aims at converting all hospitals into Women Friendly Hospitals, mobilize communities to increase awareness on birth preparedness, and care seeking for obstetric complication, and to prevent harmful practices including child marriages, counselling and developing awareness of adolescents on SRHR, personnel hygienic practices, nutrition, puberty, anaemia, Reproductive Tract Infection/Sexual Transmitted Infection, unprotected sexual activities, drug addiction, accident, violence and sexual abuse, preventing unwanted teenage pregnancy, promoting affordable and accessible health care and contraception for young women. It also includes access to safe abortion and counselling in addition to

the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services within the ambit of adolescent friendly health services.

63. HIV/AIDS prevalence rate remains low (<0.1 per cent) among general population but significant among key populations such as sex workers, Hijra, people who inject drugs, etc. (Serological Surveillance, 2011). Despite low prevalence, there has been a growth of 25 per cent in number of infected persons over the years 2001-2011. Comprehensive initiatives have been undertaken with greater facilities for women in order to prevent AIDS/STD and other forms of new diseases arising out of the impact of climate change. Women sex workers are given priority for this service. Scale and quality of targeted interventions for vulnerable population (Female sex workers of Brothel, Street and Hotel/Residence based, and their clients, Men to Men Sex and Transgender, Intra Uterine Device and External Migrants) has increased. Measures have been taken to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV and ensure effective access HIV infected women and girls to medical service. A comprehensive service package will be developed for most at risk population (MARPs). Additional harm reduction interventions for IDUs have been initiated. People affected by HIV/AIDS are given universal access to treatment, care and support services. This includes coverage of HIV testing and counselling. Coverage on interventions (basic educational, counselling, referral and legal supportive services) for key populations including people living with HIV (PLWH), along with implementation of services to prevent new HIV infections has been increased. The Government has planned to set up 20 health-care facilities for HIV testing and counselling and providing free Anti Ravish Vaccine for PLWH. More than 380 NGOs and AIDS service organizations are implementing programmes for preventing sexual transmission, increase awareness and condom promotion among high-risk groups. Building the capacity of NGOs, to change behaviour in vulnerable populations and prevent the spread of HIV is underway.

64. About 22.5 million women receive nutritional services and Vitamin A supplement reached 95 per cent of 6-9 months old kids. Iron-deficiency and other nutritional anaemia are addressed through awareness raising, the routine service-delivery network and National Nutrition Services (NNS). Services include information and communication activities for reducing malnutrition and anaemia and behavioural change and communication to promote good nutritional practices; Control and prevention of anaemia, Iron-folic acid supplementation for pregnant women; Iron supplementation and deworming of Adolescent Girls, and Management of severe and moderate acute malnutrition (facility and community level). Programmes on food security and safety net also address nutrition. The proportion of women taking iron folic acid supplementation during the last pregnancy is rising. Additionally, several programmes for ensuring food security are under implementation and under the safety net programmes, poor lactating mothers are given an allowance to cover nutritional deficiencies.

65. The Gender Strategy aims to ensure gender balanced human resources (service providers) in health sector with appropriate skills to deliver gender sensitive, non-discriminatory quality health services. On-the-job training was given under operational plan of in-service training in FY 2013-2014 in 1,228 batches to 29,049 persons locally and 100 persons abroad. The training included essential service delivery, Management training, Orientation of the members of District Training Coordination Committee and District Upazila Training Team and subject-wise specialized training implemented by different sections. There are 12 junior

midwifery institutions in the private sector, with total seats of 320, to produce midwifery professionals (18-month course). To facilitate attendance at childbirths by skilled health personnel, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has a programme to produce community-based skilled birth attendants. There are 47 facilities — 45 in the government sector and 2 in the private sector to provide such training. A total of 131 nursing institutions, with 8,740 seats are offering different types of nursing degrees in both government and private sectors, offering different types of nursing degrees.

66. Institutes of Health Technology produces medical technologists responsible for technical jobs under the supervision of medical experts. For a steady growth of private institutions, by now there are 137 institutions to produce medical technologists. Eleven government and 104 private institutions offer diploma and/or BSc/MSc courses. Four institutions (government plus private) offer certificate course in medical technology. The total number of seats in diploma, BSc and MSc courses is 17,451, and that for certificate course is 180. Medical Assistants are produced by Medical Assistant Training School (MATS) through a three-year academic course comprising theoretical and practical classes. They assist the medical doctors at health facilities at the upazila health complex level and below. Currently, there are 190 MATS (8 government and 182 private sector that annually produce 13,051 MATs). Currently 39,041 registered diploma nurses, 3,512 registered BSc nurses, 200 Diploma in Cardiac Nursing/Intensive Care Nursing, 2,424 registered assistant nurses, 6,318 registered family welfare visitors, 1,932 registered junior midwives, 7,858 registered community skilled birth attendants are providing services and in some disciplines and the majority are women.

Rural women

67. As majority of the population of Bangladesh live in rural areas, the Government has special attention for the rural areas. The services for rural areas include awareness raising, social protection, education, health, water supply, sanitation, employment, microfinance and infrastructure services. Only a few are mentioned here. These services are delivered through field level officers of various agencies of the Government.

68. The National Co-operative Policy, 2014 to expedite co-operative movement, strengthen co-operative sector and to increase women's participation in women's advancement in the rural areas. Living standard of about 1.617 million women through "One Home One Farm Project" has been targeted and about 0.265 million women will be supported by the Rural Development and Cooperative Division through Comprehensive Village Development Programme (Phase-2). Different Projects of Ministry of Agriculture trained 17 lakh farmers and 80 thousand officers and staffs on modern technology of which 25 per cent are women. Among 33,432 agriculture business entrepreneurs who created employment of 39,000 persons and of entrepreneurs 36.3 per cent are women. A corner for women has been marked in 60 growers' markets and 15 wholesale markets by Department of Agriculture. A total of 25,000 women are being trained on market conditions, value addition, and commodity prices. About 5,50,700 women received training on technology of crop production, comprehensive pest management, post-harvest preservation and management of crops and marketing. Women's participation in making fishing nets

and other equipment is 45 per cent and 12 per cent of the trained people in fish cultivation and management are women. Department of livestock nominates 50 per cent participants from women in farmers' training programmes in its development projects.

69. Women's involvement in social forestry, mangrove and coastal greenbelt expansion and protected area management programmes has increased over time. Poor women organized by non-government organizations are assigned for tree plantation and care under different projects. Women benefit from the forestry programmes and get share of the sale proceeds of the harvested lots at the end of rotation according to Social Forestry (amendment) Rules, 2009 and 2011. Among 109 thousand rural beneficiaries of Social Afforestation Programmes, 30 per cent are women. Among 38 Integrated Protected Areas Co-management projects, 50 per cent of the beneficiaries from ultra-poor and destitute women are involved in participatory biodiversity preservation activities. Also, 30 per cent women's representation has been ensured in local project planning committee.

70. Ministry of Environment and Forest created 1.0 million person-months of employment opportunity under the Biodiversity conservation and Ecotourism programme of which 30 per cent are women. Under the Community based Adaptation to Climate Change through Coastal Afforestation Project, 12,708 beneficiaries involved in social forestation programme were trained in tree plantation, nursery development and other related activities of which 45 per cent beneficiaries are women. The Climate Resilient Participatory Afforestation and Reforestation Project of the Forest Department will include 25,332 persons as beneficiaries of which 40 per cent are women.

71. The Climate Change Gender Action Plan is being implemented. Within the climate change adaptation framework building resilience to climate change impact is prioritized and women's involvement is promoted in different sectors. Women's role is gradually becoming prominent in contributing in climate change mitigation. In the adaptation area water and forest management, food security, infrastructure, disaster preparedness is addressed. Plan of Action on Disaster and Climate Risk Management in Agriculture emphasizes on capacity building of women through training to participate in the decision-making process regarding climate change and natural disaster management. Women's participation in mitigation is mainly through low carbon generating activities such as renewable energy like solar power, improved cooking stoves and biogas, waste management, which were mainly initiated for livelihood support, environmental protection, and increasing access to energy or for poverty reduction.

72. The National Plan for Disaster Management identified women as a distinct target group and agent in disaster forecasting, preparedness and management. Women's participation has been ensured in the Disaster Management Committees at the district, upazila and union levels and among community level volunteers. The volunteers are trained on early warning, evacuation, rescue and first aid. The Cyclone Shelter Management Committees also have women representation ensured. A guidebook on practicing gender and social inclusion in DRR has been developed and distributed to address women's needs. So far, 18,000 urban volunteers and 6,540 Cyclone Preparedness Programme volunteers have been trained. One fifth among them is women who positively indicate their enthusiasm for social service.

73. With the growing understanding of climate change impact and need of energy efficiency, improved cook stoves is expanding with more involvement of women. More than 30 organizations are engaged in the rural renewable energy sector. As of December 2012, Grameen Shakti, one of the pioneering organizations alone has installed 944,653 ICSs in rural areas. GS trained more than 1,000 local youth especially women to make, sell and repair ICSs. Solar home systems (SHS) is becoming popular and have made a positive impact on off-grid and remote rural areas to light up homes, shops, fishing boats, etc. It is also used to charge cellular phones, run televisions, radio, etc. Similarly women's role in livestock and subsequent biogas production using biodigesters is on the increase.

74. Under the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme phase-ii project, 203 households have been rehabilitated by constructing disaster resilient houses in two disaster resilient villages. Women who had been staying on embankments after Cyclone Aila have received the opportunity to live a decent and secure life. Another 260 households in the urban areas have also been rehabilitated. Sanitary latrines and 203 km of water pipelines have been installed in the coastal belt, which have reduced women's workload.

75. Women constitute about 27 per cent of the members in water management cooperatives associations in small-scale water management units (<1,000 hectares) who are engaged in drainage improvement, command area development/irrigation, water conservation, and flood management. Women also play important roles in water supply and sanitation groups at the community level and constitute about 30 per cent of the members.

76. Up to March, 2015, 252 cluster villages were built and 10,650 families were rehabilitated under Guchhagram project. The names of both husband and wife are included in the land ownership document implying the rehabilitation of 10,650 women. For socioeconomic development of these rehabilitated families, micro-credit has been distributed through Bangladesh Rural Development Board.

77. The Social protection programmes in rural areas target women and include, Vulnerable Group Feeding, Vulnerable Group Development, Food For Work, Lactating Mothers Allowance, Old Age Allowance of MoWCA, Vulnerable Group Feeding, Work For Money, rural Maintenance programme, Employment Generation Programme for the Poor, Test Relief, Food, Food Assistance in Chittagong Hill Tract and such others.

Disadvantaged groups of women

78. The Government promoted equity considering the needs of different groups of disadvantaged population. The Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act 2013 allows all disabled persons to get support. Currently, rules for this act are being formulated. The Government runs several projects for the disabled persons under the social safety net programmes including allowances for insolvent disabled persons, stipends for disable students, grants for schools for disabled persons, an Autistic Academy, fund for the Welfare of Burnt and Disabled, allowances for the financially insolvent disabled and forming a Trust for the protection of the persons with neurodevelopmental disabilities. Welfare Trust for Physical disabilities provides services. Schools are being run for children with different types of disabilities. 1 per cent quota for officers and 5 per cent quota for staff in public

service are reserved for persons with disabilities. The Information and Communication Technology Division has converted 105 books into e-book for the blind. A National Disability Complex and a women's hostel has been established. Bangladesh hosted the first Regional Conference on Autism in 2011 and a National Steering Committee on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, is functioning. Advocate Saima Wazed Hossain, daughter of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, won the South- East Asia Region Award for Excellence in Public Health in fight against neurodevelopmental disabilities. She is the architect of South Asia Autism Network that brought the regional countries together to address the growing challenge of this disorder. In her initiative Bangladesh hosted first-ever global conference on autism in 2011. In 2014, Bangladesh launched a global initiative to address the challenges of Autism Spectrum Disorders in the South-East Asia region.

79. Acid Survivors' Foundation supports acid victims for livelihood development. Support is given to disadvantaged including transgender, gypsies, low caste and other disadvantaged groups. Out of 18,025 beneficiaries 7,335 were women and transgender are 3,349.

80. The 7FYP emphasized on tribal health, autism, mental health, geriatric care, and health education. Efforts are ongoing to expand education, health, social protection and other social services to the tribal. Necessary programmes will be implemented in Madhupur forest area for Garo tribes. The tribal lifestyle, particularly of those residing in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, shaped by the rugged terrain, hilly environment, scattered population, frequent shift of homesteads, Jhum cultivation, inadequacy of communications, multiplicity of ethnicities and languages, post-conflict environment, etc. are considered in designing health and other service delivery.

81. Transgender people are now officially recognized. There are more than 9,000 transgender persons in the country and the Government has undertaken programmes to develop their livelihoods in all districts. In 2015-2016, 6,816 persons were supported for education, training, capital support for business and monthly allowance for old ones. The Government is taking various programmes to ensure financial and health security of older women under the National Policy on Population Ageing adopted in 2013.

82. Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015 consider the majority of the women and girl domestic workers. The policy aims at their protection and provides to train them and take initiatives for special training to develop them as migrant labourers. It also includes provision for sick leave, health services and ensuring maternal leave in case of their pregnancy. It calls for ensuring safe work environment, defined working hour and entertainment facilities and practice their religion. The policy also includes steps to be taken against harassments of domestic workers.

83. Persons with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases receive psychosocial counselling and free treatment. Their identity is kept confidential. Social awareness and reproductive health education programmes include issues related to STD and HIV/AIDS. A gender assessment and a national consultation on punitive laws have been conducted to assess the status of the epidemic through the lens of gender and to identify legal barriers. The Government plans to take necessary preventive and corrective measures based on the findings.

84. Monitoring of recruiting agencies has been strengthened to protect migrant workers from exploitation. Twelve labour wings have been established and 09 officers posted in the wings. Online registration system of migrant labourers has been established. Complaints Management Cell for Expatriate Female Workers has been established in May 2016. Training for aspirant migrant workers on different trades is arranged by Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower and Training. Women migrants are given special training on trade, language, safety measures and rules. In 2016, until May a total of 60,034 women have been employed as migrant labourers. MoEWOE has established five safe homes in Riyadh and Jeddah of KSA, Oman, Jordan and UAE to extend necessary assistance in regard to redress the problems of the female domestic workers. Pre departure orientation training has been strengthened to build their capacity in facing the challenges and adverse situation in overseas employment. BMET is going to establish two Support Centres in Riyadh and Jeddah in KSA.

Marriage and family relations

85. Bangladesh Law does not prohibit women from mobility for the purpose of household or work. Nothing in the law or custom obliges a Muslim wife to change her name after getting married. She can continue to bear her family name, and retain her independent legal personality, although her marriage is registered. Marriage is not an obstacle for any women legally in choosing a profession. It is also legally possible for her to own property, act independently and engage in all types of lawful civil and commercial acts.

86. As discussed earlier, social norms, Purdah, women's lack of education, low self-confidence, etc. are factors limiting her mobility and scope for higher education or employment. As per general custom women move to their in-law's house but there are instances of the reverse or having independent nuclear family. There is no legal restriction of choosing her own place of residence but women often follow their husband's place of residence. Upon marrying, a woman retains her full legal capacity in respect of travelling, entering into contracts and all legal actions pertaining to her movable and immovable property. Legally she can retain her finances separate from those of her husband.

87. Upon desolation of a marriage a woman can retain her property and has certain rights which are the responsibility of the husband, such as maintenance and payment of dower, subject to the provisions in the marriage contract.

Overall development initiatives

88. The Government takes relentless efforts through appropriate policies, legislation, strategies, national plan of action and programme for empowering women. Women's mobility and visibility in public domain, both in rural and urban areas have significantly improved over time. Progress of women is evident in their increasing economic participation in construction, manufacturing and service sectors, crop production, livestock, fisheries and self-employment activities. Positive indicators of women's advancement in the country are reflected in continuing gender parity in school enrolment, gradually lowered infant mortality, decrease in maternal mortality rate and the progress in health and education areas.

89. The Government of Bangladesh formulated the National Women Development Policy in 2011 in light of the Constitution, the Convention, the Beijing Platform for Action and broad-based consultation with stakeholders including human rights organizations. MoWCA is working with other ministries for the implementation of the NWDP 2011. The Government is implementing its 7FYP, in line with Vision 2021 and the Sustainable Development Goals, which incorporates a gender strategy. The vision of the Government as stated is establishing "a country where men and women will have equal opportunities and rights and women will be recognized as equal contributors in economic, social and political development." The mission of the plan is to ensure women's advancement as self-reliant human beings and reduce discriminatory barriers by taking both development and institutional measures.

90. The framework for women's empowerment in 7FYP for gender equality comprises of four areas of strategic objectives:

(a) **Improve women's human capabilities**: deals with women's and girl's access to health care, life expectancy, nutrition, reproductive health, education, information, training, and other services that enables women to achieve better health and educational outcomes.

(b) **Increase women's economic benefit**: relates to women's access to or control over productive assets, resources, services, skills, property, employment, income, information, technology, financial services, and other economic opportunities including community resources like land, water, forest.

(c) **Enhance women's voice and agency**: entails women's role as decision makers in public and private spheres including politics and promotion of their leadership.

(d) **Create an enabling environment for women's advancement**: addresses sociopolitical environment, legal and policy support, and congenial social norms, oversight, enforcement of laws, collection of sex-disaggregated data, developing capacity, implementation and monitoring of gender strategies.

91. To implement these strategic objectives, seven action areas have been identified that contribute in achieving results in these four areas are:

(a) Increase access to human development opportunities;

(b) Enhance access to and control over productive resources;

(c) Increase participation and decision making;

(d) Establish conducive legal and regulatory environment;

(e) Improve institutional capacity, accountability and oversight;

(f) Increase protection and resilience from crisis and shocks;

(g) Promote positive social norms, which include recognition and sharing of care work.

92. The above action areas provide a broad framework of women's advancement in line with the Convention, and the Government is committed to pursue the cause within the framework.

Conclusion

93. The Government of Bangladesh is sincere in upholding the rights of women and facilitating advancement of all women and girls. The Government is also conscious of the needs to further strengthen its efforts to ensure equality. There are emerging challenges of climate change, natural calamities and reaching out to all corners of the country. The Government understands the vulnerability of women and the need for special attention to their needs. The poverty and vulnerability of women and girls yields differential impacts of policies and programmes on them. Therefore, the Government takes policy and programme measures to address the challenges of women advancement. Resources, both technical and financial are necessary but limited for the Government to keep all its commitments.

94. As promotion of gender equality requires multi-dimensional support, coordinated efforts of all is essential. The Government is therefore trying to create a synergy within the government machinery and the civil society organizations in attaining the objectives of the Convention, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. A common vision of attaining gender equality is pursued to bring all to work together in keeping commitments, to move forward in our pursuit of gender equality and justice.